



Empower Oakland 2024 Candidate Questionnaire

Empower Oakland is a movement fueled by Oakland residents who recognize that “business as usual politics” will only further perpetuate Oakland’s downward spiral. We believe in empowering Oaklanders to amplify their collective voices for greater political impact and influence.

All submissions will be published on empoweroakland.com to educate Oakland voters and will be unedited for spelling and grammar. Empower Oakland will also use candidate submissions to help inform their Candidate Endorsement process. Candidates may be asked to interview in-person with the Empower Oakland Endorsement Committee. Final endorsement decisions will be made by early September.

Please email the completed questionnaire as a .docx or .pdf document to info@empoweroakland.com. Due by Friday, August 16th by 6PM.

Candidate Name: Zac Unger

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Office & District Sought: Oakland City Council, District 1

Campaign Website: www.zac4oakland.com

Social Media Handles

- Twitter: @zacunger
- Facebook: Zac Unger for Oakland City Council D1
- Instagram:
- LinkedIn:
- TikTok:

Expected total Fundraising Amount: 200,000

Funds Raised To Date: 170,000

General Questions

1. What is your background/experience in Oakland?
 - a. I am a lifelong Oakland resident and I have been an Oakland firefighter for 27 years, as well as being an elected union leader for over a decade. All three of my kids attended OUSD from kindergarten through high school, my wife owns a small business here, and we have experience as both tenants and landlords in this City. I have served on various neighborhood committees, including the Rockridge Community Planning Council, the Friends of the Rockridge Library, and in numerous PTA roles. In addition, I have been involved with Oakland City government in many ways, which I can detail in response to questions below.
2. What are the top two challenges facing Oakland today? What are the bright spots?
 - a. Public safety concerns are making Oaklanders feel unsafe and unwelcome in their home town. Crime is also affecting businesses, driving them away, reducing their revenues, increasing their costs, and leading to a spiral of lower tax revenues and decreased services.



demanded a deep understanding of Oakland’s needs and the wishes of Oakland voters. I am particularly proud of the leading role I played in writing Measure T, where business, labor, and community groups teetered on the brink of mutually assured destruction for months before we were able to reach consensus and deliver a compromise measure that the citizens of Oakland could support.

- b. As an elected union leader for the firefighters, I have firsthand experience with Oakland budgets, unfunded liabilities, HR processes, and Council procedures. I am proud of the fact that Local 55 has always been a creative and a collaborative partner with the City when it comes to addressing fiscal problems. These discussions are never easy, but anybody who enters negotiations with an absolutist perspective is doomed to failure.
- c. I have served on many community groups and oversight boards. On the Peralta Community College Oversight committee, I made sure that we highlighted the ways in which money was being misspent on administrative costs, rather than on ensuring student success as the voters had intended. As a member of the Rockridge Community Planning Council, we pushed for dense, transit-oriented development in appropriate locations, helping the city to eventually pass the “Upzone Rockridge” rules that will help ameliorate our housing crisis. I am also very proud of the years of work I have put into our local public schools, especially Claremont Middle, which was an underperforming school when my kids attended, but has been transformed—in part through community and PTA involvement—into one of the gems of the OUSD.

Oakland City Council

5. **What specific and measurable improvements in public safety will you deliver for Oaklanders in 2 years? 4 years? Please describe how you plan to deliver these public safety improvements. As part of your response, please:**
 - a. Summarize what existing public safety investments you might increase, reduce or eliminate to ensure adequate resources for you to meet your goal.
 - i. Increase police staffing by planning for more academies and making Oakland a desirable place for officers to work, thereby reducing attrition.
 - ii. Increase enforcement of human trafficking and reckless driving.
 - iii. Expand the Crime Reduction Teams under the direction of Area Captains so OPD can quickly and effectively respond to the crime trends and patterns in each part of the City. Prioritize patrols in commercial corridors to reduce retail theft and make people feel safe to shop.
 - iv. Don’t be afraid of technology, which is a smart and fiscally responsible way to increase the effectiveness of our police force. We should deploy license plate readers, cameras, drones, and tracking devices in ways that target criminals but do not violate privacy or civil rights
 - v. Continue to invest in Ceasefire to identify and engage the relatively small number of individuals involved in group and gang violence and the organized criminal networks responsible for the majority of homicides, robberies, and certain property crimes.
 - vi. Increase 911 staffing and efficiency.



- vii. Take a hard look at all violence-prevention programs to determine which ones can demonstrate effectiveness with concrete metrics.
- viii. Remember that public safety includes the Fire Department. We can't afford to reduce response times in the OFD and we must also plan for and fund disaster preparedness programs.
- b. Discuss your perspectives on:
 - i. The effectiveness of Oakland's non-sworn responses to public safety issues. Which ones (if any) are successful and should be continued? Which ones (if any) are not successful and should be discontinued?
 1. Ceasefire, which targets individuals who are perpetrators of gun violence, has proven to be effective. We must continue to invest in this dual-pronged program which combines sworn and non-sworn responses from OPD and Dept. of Violence Prevention.
 2. MACRO has potential, but has become more of a homeless outreach program and has not diverted as many calls away from OPD as had been initially hoped. We must figure out how to refocus this program on its initial goals in order to free up OPD to respond to high-acuity calls.
 - ii. The appropriate staffing level of sworn police officers for the city of Oakland (provide a specific number of officers you would like to see in place by December 2028).
 1. We must first focus on getting to 800 officers before we think about expanding beyond that. While I'm certainly willing to consider going over 800, I don't think that discussion is fruitful at this point when we are still so far away from our initial goal. We must address attrition, and explore ways to make our academies more successful, so that we can hire and retain quality candidates who will be successful in their field training.
 - iii. Your prioritized strategies for addressing various types of crime, including gun violence, retail robbery, bipping, residential burglary, traffic violence, and any others.
 1. I am not a fan of criminalizing poverty—broken tail lights, for example—but we do need high-profile enforcement of crimes that matter. We must change the mindset that Oakland is open for criminal business. We need traffic stops for reckless driving; we need to arrest the men who frequent the open-air sex markets along International Boulevard.
 2. In order to do this we are going to need to reduce the paperwork burden on our officers so they can spend more time doing actual police work. I won't pretend to know which forms are duplicative, but I know that our neighboring agencies such as the ACSO are able to make far more arrests in a shift than our OPD officers. We must look to other agencies to help us streamline our processes so that we can let officers do their vital work of enforcing serious crimes.
 3. We must collaborate with County, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies to disrupt the criminal rings behind bipping and retail theft. Arresting the kid who breaks a car window is not, in and of itself, a victory. Flipping up the chain to arrest the ringleaders who are fencing our stolen goods across state lines should be the ultimate goal.



4. We must provide alternatives to our young folks in the form of a hope agenda. I am a strong supporter of apprenticeships and job training programs, such as those provided by the building trades and the health professions. I would like to expand these programs to include white collar work, emergency response, manufacturing jobs, and other solid professions. A young person who is already receiving pension and healthcare benefits in an apprenticeship for a trade is much less likely to join his buddies when they go out stealing catalytic converters at night. We can't just expect to arrest our way out of our crime problem. I believe in short-term enforcement and long-term investment in alternatives for our youth.
- c. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals?
 - i. Everything in Oakland comes down to coalition-building and figuring out where different stakeholders can find agreement. We will never hit on a plan that satisfies everyone, but my experience with coalition-building and shuttle diplomacy demonstrates my real-world ability to actually implement policy. Anybody who thinks they have all the answers will make some great posts on Twitter but fail to actually move the needle on our problems.
6. **What specific and measurable improvements in Oakland's homelessness and housing affordability crisis will you deliver for Oaklanders in 2 years? 4 years? How do you plan to deliver these homelessness and housing affordability wins for Oakland?** As part of your response, please:
 - a. Describe the biggest problems our city faces that keep us from solving the housing crisis.
 - i. We have a shortage of affordable homes. As a firefighter, I work in encampments and with homeless folks every day. While there are certainly some people who prefer life on the streets, the vast majority of homeless people want to be housed but lack the means to do so. We must increase production of affordable housing, we must work to keep people from losing their housing, and we must preserve extant affordable housing.
 - ii. Addiction and mental health issues contribute mightily to homelessness. We must work with the County to provide services to folks suffering from these crises. Simply sweeping people like this away doesn't make them disappear; they just camp somewhere new. The County has not done an adequate job of providing services to our unhoused Oakland residents.
 - b. Summarize what homelessness/housing investments you might advance, reduce, or eliminate to ensure adequate resources are available to meet the goals you stated above. What trade-offs might need to be considered in distributing resources between different solutions?
 - i. Transitional housing works. While I don't want people to live in TuffSheds forever, we do find that a significant portion of people housed in these cabins and in Project Homekey rooms transition to permanent housing within one year. This basic level of housing allows people to take care of medical needs, report to work reliably, attend school or job training. We need to accelerate and improve transitional housing.
 - ii. We must streamline the permitting process for all levels of construction, from ADUs up to market-rate high-rises. Every developer I speak with says that permitting and approvals take far longer here than in any other city where they do business. We need to beef up



our staff in the permitting offices and make sure that they are creatively helping people build. I'm not advocating for reducing environmental or labor standards, but we need to end duplicative permitting efforts and stalled bureaucracy.

- iii. We should explore using City-, County-, and OUSD-owned lands for fast tracked development. In particular, we should emphasize the construction of workforce housing as an additional incentive to attract and retain our valuable city employees.
 - iv. Developers should be able to make a solid profit on their investments, but they also cannot be completely relieved of affordable housing and community benefits requirements. The compromise level is probably going to leave everybody on all sides feeling just a little bit dissatisfied, but in my experience, that's one of the hallmarks of a productive negotiation.
- c. Discuss your perspectives on:
- i. The respective roles of affordable (below-market-rate) housing and market-rate housing
 - 1. As mentioned above, we must require developers to provide a certain level of affordable units, while not squeezing them so hard that they decide not to do business in Oakland at all.
 - 2. We should not demolish affordable housing to make way for market-rate housing unless the new development contains more affordable units than the previous iteration.
 - ii. The City's Housing Element and proposed zoning reforms
 - 1. Oakland's Housing Element has literally hundreds of goals, some old, some new, some achievable, some not. In general I agree with the principles of protecting tenants from predatory landlords and helping to preserve existing housing stock. But we also must rapidly encourage and incentivize the construction of new units, from ADUs on up. In general I agree with increasing density along commercial corridors, and with reducing parking requirements near mass transit hubs. We must also do a better job of leveraging County, State, and Federal money to help us build the purely affordable housing that does not pencil out for for-profit developers.
 - iii. Oakland's Encampment Management Policy, implementation of it to date, and improvements needed moving forward
 - 1. The EMP is valuable in theory but we have not been enforcing it. I do not believe the continued sweeps will make homeless people magically disappear, but I do believe that we can move people more productively towards safe, sanctioned camping areas. In these areas we can better provide concentrated services to the unhoused and also reduce friction between unhoused folks and the neighborhoods where they currently camp. I believe that encampments should not be allowed to maintain their presence in commercial corridors, near schools, or in parks where our children play. We will not be able to house everyone overnight, but we can certainly set and enforce limits on where we allow these semi-permanent camps.
 - iv. The City/County's approach to mental health and substance abuse treatment



1. I believe that the County has not dedicated adequate resources towards Oakland, in part because Oakland has been maintaining that we can provide these services ourselves. Municipal government can't be all things to all people and we need to know which services we can provide and which we should demand the County provide. We must end duplicative services and allow the County to provide the vast majority of medical and addiction-treatment services.
- d. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals?
- i. Anybody who tells you that they can achieve all their goals on homelessness and housing is blowing smoke. These are difficult problems with multivalent solutions and they will all take a long time. We need to be realistic, but dogged. I am the only candidate in my race who has extensive experience providing services to our residents and also creating and evaluating new programs to deliver service. I understand that we will have many failures and setbacks along the way, but I have the humility to know that I don't have all the answers, and the skills and temperament to seek help from people more expert than I am. I am currently engaged in the project of transitioning our ambulance service from a private service focused on returning profits to Wall Street, to a County-run service that will focus on patient care and return profit to our local economy. It's that kind of complicated, multi-agency work that we'll need in order to begin to put a dent in our homelessness crisis.
7. **What specific and measurable improvements will you deliver with respect to Oakland's public infrastructure in 2 years? 4 years? How do you plan to deliver these improvements?** As part of your response, please:
- a. Summarize the biggest problem(s) Oakland faces, how we can address them, and what trade-offs might need to be considered (if applicable).
 - i. The poor condition of our roads is both emblematic of our civic dysfunction and a constant annoyance and economic drain for our residents and business owners.
 - ii. I believe that high-quality parks serve as anchor points for vibrant communities. Too often our parks are blighted by trash, poorly maintained, and unwelcoming for our children and seniors. We must keep up our parks and make sure that they are available for their intended recreational uses.
 - b. Discuss any specific improvements you expect to make during your 4-year term related to:
 - i. Blight, Litter and Dumping
 1. The trash on our streets is both unsightly and unsafe. In addition, new capital is unlikely to invest in Oakland when they see the condition of our public spaces. We must continue to invest in anti-dumping efforts. In addition, some dumping is committed willfully by construction crews who find it cheaper and easier to destroy our neighborhoods rather than take the time and expense of going to the dump. We must enforce our anti-dumping policies and hold these illegal dumpers to account with fines or arrests.
 - ii. Road repair & repaving



1. I'm heartened by the quickening pace of our repaving efforts over the past few years. We must continue to expeditiously spend the money allocated in Measures KK and U on road repairs, as the voters intended. Success breeds success and every mile of road we paves increases the chances that we will be able to renew Measure U when it expires.
- iii. Bike/pedestrian safety and public transportation
 1. Vehicular violence is a scourge in our City and we must continue to consider bicycle and pedestrian safety in all of our infrastructure plans. As a firefighter I understand the hesitance to impede our response with bike lanes, but I think we need to have a hard conversation about how prioritizing emergency traffic above all other concerns can actually lead to a higher fatality rate on our roads.
- iv. Streetscape improvements (trees, parklets, etc)
 1. I'm a fan of parklets and removing slip lanes in commercial districts in order to facilitate the creation of public common spaces. Cities that prioritize cars above all else lose the character and walkability that define attractive streetscapes.
 2. Street trees not only provide proven emotional benefits to residents, they are also key to cooling our cities, providing bird habitat, and reducing flooding and toxic runoff.
- v. Stormwater management
 1. We must carefully consider how paving every inch of land increases our flooding risk. Green spaces, roadside and median swales, and street trees are crucial to making sure that we reduce our flooding risk. In addition, we must focus on a long-term plan for sewer maintenance, just as we're doing with street repaving, to make sure that our underground infrastructure is constantly upgraded, maintained, and preserved.
- c. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals?
 - i. Over the years I have had the opportunity to be involved with many discussions about City infrastructure and improvements. These always involve careful tradeoffs and interaction with stakeholders. I'm not under any illusion that improving our infrastructure will be cheap or easy, but I have the experience of working on these issues over many years. In addition, I hold both a Bachelor's and a Master's Degree in Environmental Science (Brown University and Berkeley, respectively) and I am an advocate for smart growth that preserves our environment while also allowing for dense, vibrant cities.

8. Please describe how you plan to address Oakland's immediate fiscal budget crisis AND long-term structural budget deficit. What specific and measurable improvements will you deliver in 2 years? 4 years? As part of your response, please:

- a. Summarize the largest contributors to Oakland's budget challenges and your understanding of why previous Councils/Mayoral administrations have not solved the issue(s).
 - i. For too long, Oakland has attempted to be all things to all people. We are not the State, the Federal government, or even the County. In good times we expand the services we provide and in bad times we are stuck with all of the new departments and programs. The next few years are going to require difficult conversations about what we can and



can't do as a city. My belief is that at the top of the hierarchy we have public safety, followed by infrastructure, then youth/senior services. We must continue to fund these at robust levels, but beyond that everything else will unfortunately be on the table and all programs will need to be able to prove their value to the citizens of Oakland if they want to continue to receive city funding.

- ii. While salaries make up the largest part of our City budget, I don't believe that simply slashing employee compensation will have salutary effects. At a time when we are already losing multiple police officers every month to other cities, I doubt that reducing compensation would help us achieve our goal of stabilizing the police department's staffing.
- b. Describe how you will reduce expenses (including cuts you would make to specific programs) that will free up resources that can be allocated toward addressing other budget priorities.
 - i. We have allowed our ranks of directors, deputy directors, consultants, and outside contractors to swell, even as we let our basic staff positions attrit downwards. We must take a hard look at the managerial and consultant ranks to see if they're doing valuable work. At the staff level, we have also allowed ourselves to create duplicative positions across departments, and we may be able to reduce some costs through consolidation and attrition.
 - ii. All of our departments and programs must be able to show their value with clear metrics. We can't provide every social service under the sun, and we have given the County reason to withhold services by pretending that we can do everything ourselves. We must devolve many social service and health care programs back to the County, where they belong.
- c. Describe how you will increase revenues to fund much-needed services, avoid painful cuts, invest in the city's future growth, and address the structural deficit.
 - i. Increasing the dollar value of the Measure Z replacement was a good idea, and will bring in an additional 10 million per year if it passes.
 - ii. The ambulance contract I've been working on has the potential to bring in millions per year while also delivering better service to our residents.
 - iii. We must fully fund all revenue-generating positions, especially those in permitting that allow builders to get projects off the ground.
 - iv. Explore changes in permitting fees and timelines in order to incentivize developers to bring their business here to Oakland.
 - v. Create business-friendly policies including tax breaks to help new businesses get through the first difficult years until they are well-established.
 - vi. Use Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts to activate underutilized parts of town, which will increase our tax base over the long term.
 - vii. Work with the Port on smart redevelopment of Howard Terminal in ways that will promote light industrial and manufacturing industries, providing jobs and growing the tax base.
- d. Discuss your perspectives on:
 - i. Major sources of general fund revenues, and any recent trends or changes
 - 1. Clearly, relying as heavily on RETT as we do has been a recipe for boom and bust cycles. While it will be difficult to unwind that and switch to something entirely different, we can certainly place higher emphasis on smoothing out



- revenues by reliably funding our rainy-day fund. We should also be more diligent about actually using one-time revenues for one-time expenses, rather than relying on them for ongoing costs.
- ii. Major general fund expenditures, and any recent trends or changes
 1. Our fractured system of having a General Fund that is primarily police and fire, and then dozens of separate, dedicated funds is balky and unmanageable. It ends up leaving us with surpluses in some funds while we're making cuts in others. We should consider having fewer siloed pots of money so that we can consider city budgets wholesale rather than with a scattershot approach.
 2. The number of police and firefighters we have on long-term injury is unsustainable and contributes to our enormous overtime costs. Our workers must either be given the quality care they need, or provided with a clear path towards a disability retirement. At the moment, the City provides neither, so we carry hundreds of public safety personnel on our books without getting the benefit of their services. A "worker's comp carveout" program has proven beneficial in other cities in getting workers high quality care and a quicker return to work. Imagine saving the salary of even just a few dozen police officers and firefighters by getting them healthy, rather than grinding the remaining personnel into dust via punishing (and expensive) levels of mandatory overtime.
 - iii. Unfunded liabilities, including pensions and deferred maintenance, and any recent trends or changes
 1. With PEPRA for pensions and recent changes to retirement medical costs for police and fire, the trajectory of our post-employment benefit costs has been trending significantly downwards. This trend will continue to accelerate as we replace Classic members with PEPRA members.
 2. Deferred maintenance, especially of our roadways, actually ends up being a cost rather than a savings. The amount of money we spend on lawsuits related to our roads and sidewalks could pay for significant repairs. I would rather spend our money on making our city better instead of repaying people hurt by our poor infrastructure.
 - e. Describe how you will maintain objectivity despite pressure and specific budget asks by the groups and organizations that have endorsed you.
 - i. I have been endorsed and supported by both labor groups and business groups; by workers' rights organizations and by corporations that never use union labor; by landlords and by tenant activists; by politicians from all sides of the Bay Area political spectrum. It is oddly liberating to know that every single decision I make will result in disappointment from somebody who has supported me. There is literally no decision I can make on any contentious issue that would satisfy everyone who has placed their trust in me. I have the connections and temperament to listen to everyone, but the freedom to follow only my own counsel at the end of every day.
 - ii. I am in the enviable position of seeking office in order to finish out a long career in public service rather than to begin a career in politics. I don't need to triangulate towards anyone or appease anybody else. I have the freedom to legislate in exactly the way that



I think is best for Oakland, and if Oakland's voters don't like that, they can vote me right off the dais and I will happily go back to just being a citizen of the City I love.

- f. Describe the experience(s) from your past that should give Oaklanders confidence you can deliver on these goals?
- i. As a president of an Oakland union, I have always advocated hard for my members to receive the wages, benefits, and working conditions that they deserve. But my entire history with Local 55 has been one of collaboration and compromise. No other union has made the sacrifices that we have, and we've done it without grandstanding or requests for acclaim. In times of difficulty, Local 55 has recognized our dual role in providing for our members while also looking out for the long-term health of the City. We are always first at the table with creative compromises. In addition, I'm proud of the fact that I've fought not only for our members, but for our members' ability to deliver unimpeded, high-quality service to the citizens. Whether it's been through contract bargaining or my work dragging various ballot measures across the finish line, I have demonstrated the ability to be realistic in negotiations, to work across the aisle, and to arrive at mutually satisfying conclusions to difficult controversies.

9. Please describe what you plan to do differently from business-as-usual in city hall to ensure effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable governance in Oakland. As part of your response, please:

- a. Describe in what ways the City of Oakland is meeting and/or not meeting your definition of good government.
 - i. On too many occasions, politicians treat Oakland politics like a junior high schoolyard. Bullying, score-settling, and the creation of cliques lead to bad government, bad policy, and bad outcomes for our residents. I have never met a politician with whom I've agreed on everything; but I've also never met a politician who I couldn't work with in order to accomplish mutual goals. Far too often I see Oakland politicians picking at old scabs rather than setting the past aside and getting down to work. Several decades of political experience has taught me that there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies.
- b. Summarize what changes you would make in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of city governance and increase transparency.
 - i. We need to be transparent and we need to invite public access and input, but we have to stop letting that same access be the death of progress. Oakland's elected officials are elected for a reason: because enough Oaklanders voted for them to make decisions on behalf of the community. Too often I have seen good ideas derailed by opposition that is loud but not broad. Too often I have seen positive momentum die at the feet of endless process. I am not advocating for recklessness or paying short shrift to environmental or labor standards, but we also can't just let every policy die in the quest for unanimous approval.
- c. Answer how Oakland City Council can provide greater oversight and public accountability in contracting, grant-making, and outcomes/performance management.
 - i. All grantees and contractors must show their worth with actual metrics. Bad years happen to good organizations, but if we are giving money to a vendor or contractor year



over year and they either show bad results or can't explain their results at all, they should not expect to continue to be the beneficiaries of our largesse.

- ii. As we write ballot measures and create new programs, we must continue to invest in the independent City Auditor's office, so that those professionals can call out fraud and abuse without fear of retribution.
- iii. We must make sure that we do not write RFPs in such a way that they end up with single bidders. We place a lot of excellent guardrails on our RFPs in order to get bidders who share our civic values, but if that ends up preventing us from promoting genuine competition, we will end up with shoddy products at unfair prices.

10. **For incumbents:** What is a vote you're MOST and LEAST proud of in the last four years. Briefly describe the issue, why you voted the way you did, and what you think now about that vote.

11. **For new candidates:** What was the most impactful Council vote in the past four years? Briefly describe the issue, what you think of the Council's decision, and what you would have done had you been on the Council.

- a. The Council's decision to place Measure T (progressive gross receipts tax) on the ballot was a momentous one. Not only did it reduce taxes for our struggling small businesses, but it brought taxes on large corporations in line with other large cities. And it did all that while also increasing absolute revenue by approximately twenty million dollars a year. Imagine this year's budget cycle, painful as it already was, if we had another twenty million dollars of red ink to contend with. The public safety implications of that would have been dire. I appreciate the Council's work on the Blue Ribbon Task Force to forge compromise. And even though I was not on the Council, I was a leader at the table where this Measure was actually written, where diverse stakeholders haggled over every single cell in an Excel spreadsheet, where we stormed out in anger, but then came back again the following week to effectuate the kind of compromise that we need, now more than ever, to move Oakland forward.

12. **What are the major challenges faced by Oakland businesses? What specific steps will you take to ensure that Oakland businesses can thrive and are able to create more jobs and improve the Oakland economy?**

- a. Crime. Not only do businesses suffer from direct break-ins, but shoppers and diners stay away from areas in which they feel unsafe, which starts the vicious cycle of reduced activity, reduced business tax, and reduced vibrancy for our neighborhoods. I am in favor of increasing high visibility patrols in commercial districts especially in the evenings, to help people feel safer about returning to these areas. We also need to actively investigate and pursue arrests related to retail crime. We can do this both by leveraging technology to identify perpetrators and by partnering with County, State, and Federal law enforcement to disrupt large-scale criminal fencing operations.
- b. Duplicative regulations and an overabundance of red tape. I have spoken to so many business owners who say that they have had to submit—and pay for!—multiple inspections, which end up giving them contradictory orders, delaying openings, causing unnecessary confusion, and generally spreading the idea that Oakland is a hostile place to do business. We must clarify



inspection and permitting processes, placing as many of them online as possible. Some cities have clear flowcharts for businesses to follow, allowing owners to meet with a single point of contact at the outset. In Oakland, wealthy developers can hire expeditors, but the City of Oakland should be providing essentially the same service done by City workers to help shepherd projects from infancy to successful completion.

13. There are important ballot measures that are up for vote in November. How would you vote on the following and why?

- a. Would you vote to Recall District Attorney Pamela Price? (YES/NO)
 - i. I did not support Pamela Price and I publicly endorsed her opponent. And yet I still oppose her recall, not based on the specifics of her tenure, but because I oppose California's new penchant for constant recalls. Politics is least functional when people are running for office, making promises, raising money. Politics are at their most effective when people have time to learn their job, carefully develop policy, and put the right people in the right jobs. Witness what is possibly the least effective branch of government: the US House of Representatives. This is a body with a two-year term of office, ensuring that they do no governing whatsoever, and focus entirely on useless messaging in order to juice campaign donations. I believe that recalls should be reserved for extraordinary circumstances, not simply a desire to oust a politician with whom we disagree.
- b. Would you vote to Recall Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao? (YES/NO)
 - i. I also oppose the recall of Mayor Thao for the same reason stated above, just as I opposed the recall effort that was proposed against former Mayor Libby Schaaf. Recall efforts favor the deepest pockets, and that's not the kind of democracy that I favor. Some politicians do a bad job; that's why there's always another election. A system whereby an election begins as soon as the previous one ends will lead to constant mudslinging, undermining, and ineffective government.
- c. Would you vote to pass the Oakland Measure Z renewal? (YES/NO)
 - i. Yes. I was one of the lead authors of this measure and I strongly support it. We must invest in public safety. If this measure fails we will lose 60 officers, multiple fire stations, and a whole host of violence prevention programs. This is a must-pass measure and, frankly, if I had to choose between a Zac Unger council victory and a Measure Z victory, I would give up my own race in a heartbeat.
- d. Would you vote to pass California Prop 36 (makes changes to Prop 47)? (YES/NO)
 - i. Quite honestly, I haven't had the time to do enough research to have a fully informed opinion on this yet. We need to enforce anti-theft laws and make sure that criminals are held accountable, but I also worry that simply stuffing our jails full of as many people as possible will have significant negative downstream effects on our society as a whole. The money spent on mass incarceration could be better spent on drug treatment, affordable housing, job training, etc. That being said, retail theft is a huge problem in Oakland and around the State. But I would like to see more evidence that this Measure would actually be successful in combatting this problem.